

**TOPIC: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CCHE REMEDIAL EDUCATION POLICY**

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**I. SUMMARY**

State law (§23-1-113 C.R.S.) requires the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (Commission) to review and revise the remedial education policy (Commission policy I, E) by December 15, 2013. Statute requires the Commission to align the remedial policy with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness, Colorado Department of Education's new graduation guidelines and the state's admission standards policy.

A task force appointed by the Department of Higher Education (Department) began its work to review and revise the policy in May 2012. Members established preliminary recommendations, vetted those recommendations with stakeholders around the state and revised the recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the Department developed a revised remedial education policy.

This Agenda Item presents for approval a new remedial education policy (Attachment A: Remedial Education Policy draft).

**II. BACKGROUND**

Colorado's remedial education policy provides criteria to be used by all public higher education institutions in the state in identifying students who need remedial courses in English and mathematics. The policy lays out standards whereby institutions may offer remedial courses.

The key component of Colorado's remedial education policy is the "cut score" – the level of performance at which a student is deemed to be ready for a college-level course in English or mathematics. The current cut score for English is 18, meaning a student scoring below 18 on ACT English would need a secondary evaluation to determine if he/she should be enrolled in remedial education. A student scoring 18 or above can be placed into a college-level English course. The policy review sought to recalibrate the existing cut scores using Colorado-specific data to determine whether the scores are an accurate predictor of a student's performance in college, and at the same time ensure that the policy is aligned with the admissions and other higher education policies.

Department staff presented initial recommendations from the Remedial Education Policy Review Task Force to the Commission at its August retreat. Staff subsequently presented the draft policy to the Commission at the November 7, 2013 meeting. Since the November 7 Commission meeting, the Task Force held its final meeting. Staff compiled and reviewed final comments

received from Task Force members and other stakeholders and made minor adjustments to the policy.

### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

The proposed changes to the Remedial Education policy seek to align the policy with postsecondary expectations and with high school graduation guidelines. The proposed policy increases institution flexibility by giving more placement options and more assessment tools. The proposed policy, if approved, will:

1. Increase the number of assessment options from ACT or SAT college entrance exam scores and the Accuplacer test to include Compass, PARCC and Smarter Balanced<sup>1</sup>.
2. Maintain the same English and math cut scores. Task Force members and the Department data team reviewed Colorado-specific data and determined that the scores currently in use remain appropriate for determining student success. Students scoring at or above the cut score are ready for a college-level course. Colleges may determine through the use of a secondary evaluation that some students scoring below the cut score can be placed in a college-level course if accompanied by SAI.
3. Update the testing timeline: Currently a student's assessment test scores can be used for up to five years since he/she took the assessment. The proposed policy will allow institutions to use the test scores for three years after the assessment was taken.

#### **Changes Since November 7<sup>th</sup>**

Below are the concerns expressed and changes made to the draft policy since the November, 2013 Commission meeting:

- Institution representatives requested that the policy language be clarified to explain the intent of the policy.
  - Language was included in the goal section (section 2.0 Policy Goals) to explain the purpose of the policy and the stakeholders of the policy.
- Institution representatives noted that the policy included conflicting language on students exempt from assessments and that the information was spread in different sections.
  - The information about exemptions was grouped together in the document for additional clarity (section 6.00 Students Exempt from Assessment).
- Department staff determined that some of the definitions were confusing and unclear.
  - The statutory definitions that were not referenced were deleted from the policy (section 3.00 Terminology: e.g., academic courses, preparatory courses).

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<sup>1</sup> *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced (SBAC) instruments are being field-tested nationally and by the Colorado Department of Education in an effort to implement and assess statewide college and career readiness standards for students. The research and validation studies will be available by 2016-17, at which point Colorado institutions of higher education will begin to use the approved college-readiness scores.*

- Department staff had not adequately aligned definitions in this policy with the admission standards policy.
  - The definition of a first-time undergraduate student was clarified to align with the definition in the admissions policy and the term “career and technical education” replaced with “occupational certificate programs.” (section 3.00 Terminology)
- Members of the Task Force noted that the policy includes the definition of “secondary assessment” but not the definition of “primary assessment”.
  - While institutions use the terms differently, a definition of “primary assessment” as an assessment used for admissions purposes was added. (section 3.00 Terminology)
- Institution representatives requested clarification on students exempt from assessment.
  - Section 6.00 – Students Exempt from Assessment was rewritten for clarity.
- The task force had a very lengthy thoughtful conversation about the data received from the content area expert survey conducted to validate the proposed cut scores. Based on this data, the group confirmed that the math cut score was supported by faculty and data. The English content area expert data was not as concrete. However, with the ACT course placement analysis and the content area expert data analysis, the task force finally determined that keeping the English cut score at 18 is the best approach. (Table 1 College-Ready Assessment Cut Scores)

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DHE staff recommends the Commission formally approve the proposed new policy with the implementation plan.**

#### **VI. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §22-1-113